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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 RABAT 000540

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TAGS: [PTER](#) [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [MOPS](#) [MO](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: MOROCCAN ISLAMISTS SUPPORT IRAQI "RESISTANCE"

Classified by D/Political Counselor Ian McCary for reasons  
1.5 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Some leaders of Morocco's (Islamist) Justice and Development Party (PJD), which won the popular vote and the second largest number of seats in the fall 2007 parliamentary elections, strongly support Iraqi "resistance against occupation," which is "legitimate" and distinct from acts of terror, some of which may even be caused by the USG as a pretext for maintaining a heavy military presence in the country, they allege. These views, however poorly grounded in fact, are reflected broadly on the Moroccan street. While the PJD is not encouraging members to become foreign fighters, its opposition to U.S. military intervention in the region resonates widely. End summary.

¶2. (C) In late April, Mustafa Ramid, leader of the PJD's parliamentary caucus, urged Minister of Justice Abdelouahed Radi to take steps to ensure that Moroccan citizens not be prosecuted for fighting in Iraq. Participation in acts of legitimate resistance against an "illegal" foreign military occupation of an Arab and Islamic country should not be criminalized, Ramid argued.

¶3. (C) During a conversation with D/Polcouns two weeks earlier, PJD Member of Parliament Aziz Rebbah, a member of Ramid's hardline faction within the party, offered more insight into the PJD's thinking on the Iraqi "resistance." Rebbah insisted that while the party condemned terrorism, there was a "legitimate and valiant" force of Iraqis united against the "unjust" and "illegal" U.S. military occupation of the country. He dismissed the Iraqi government as an unrepresentative puppet regime controlled by the U.S., insisting that the elections which had brought the ruling coalition to power were not credible.

¶4. (C) Asked by D/Polcouns which abductions, car bombings, and suicide attacks the PJD was inclined to support and which they would condemn, Rebbah scowled. "We do not support attacks against civilians," he insisted. Some of these attacks are carried out by narrow religious fanatics, he allowed, and others may even be perpetrated with the knowledge, if not support, of the USG, thus providing a pretext for continued U.S. military occupation of the country, he charged.

¶5. (C) Rebbah insisted that attacks directed against armed foreign occupiers were fair game. "All Arabs and Muslims support this," he maintained. "This is just the way we are. We may argue among ourselves but when a foreigner occupies an Islamic land, even a tiny sliver of Muslim land, we are all united against them," he exclaimed. Some PJD leaders have spoken publicly (and rhetorically) of their "readiness" to join the battle against "occupation" in Iraq and Palestine.

¶6. (C) PJD Assistant Secretary-General Lahcen Daoudi, who through his frequent media appearances offers a more moderate, modernist image of the party, denied to D/Polcouns during an early June conversation that he, Ramid, or anyone in the PJD was actively encouraging Moroccans to go fight in

Iraq. "What we are saying is that the U.S. presence is illegitimate, that it is causing rather than solving problems, and that the U.S. should leave," he maintained. Asked whether the party believed attacks on Iraqi police or government officials could be religiously justified, he responded with an emphatic "no."

¶17. (C) Comment: We believe that Ramid and Rebbah's belief, however misguided, in a "legitimate" Iraqi resistance distinct from the terrorists, is a view widely held in Morocco. Al-Jazeera, which has implicitly promoted this belief in its coverage of Iraq, is widely seen and is by far the most popular channel in the ubiquitous and consistently full cafes that line Morocco's main thoroughfares and back streets. Small but loud pan-Arabist groupings, such as the "Moroccan Committee for the Support of Palestine and Iraq" have made common cause with the Islamists on this issue and have periodically co-sponsored (generally small) demonstrations to make their point.

¶18. (C) Comment continued: While the critical, but more moderate views of Daoudi tend to reflect those of party chief Othmani, and thus the PJD's formal position, our sense is that the party rank and file would tend toward the harsher views of Ramid and Rabbah. Regardless, support among the PJD membership and broader Moroccan public for "resistance" in Iraq creates a problem for the GOM, which has generally supported reconciliation in Iraq and has publicly rolled up numerous cells recruiting foreign fighters in recent years. MFA officials privately acknowledge to us that wariness of public opinion is one factor keeping GOM support for the

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Iraqi government low key, if quietly constructive. End comment.

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